

# Archaeology and Metal-Detecting - The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

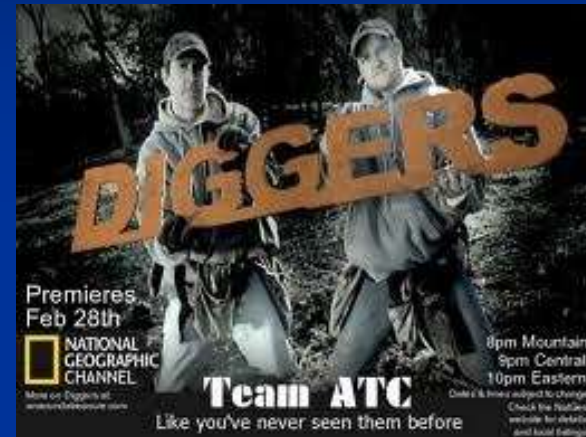


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# The Ugly: American Diggers and National Geographic Diggers



American Diggers, Spike TV

National Geographic Channel

# The Ugly: Great Relic Hunting Shoot-Out

Organized by Metal-Detecting Group

200 – 250 Camouflaged Participants

Each pays ca. \$200

Land-owner paid \$20,000 - \$40,000

Artifacts removed from historic context

Sites destroyed

Award given for best artifact

Artifacts dispersed across country, assume many sold

History destroyed

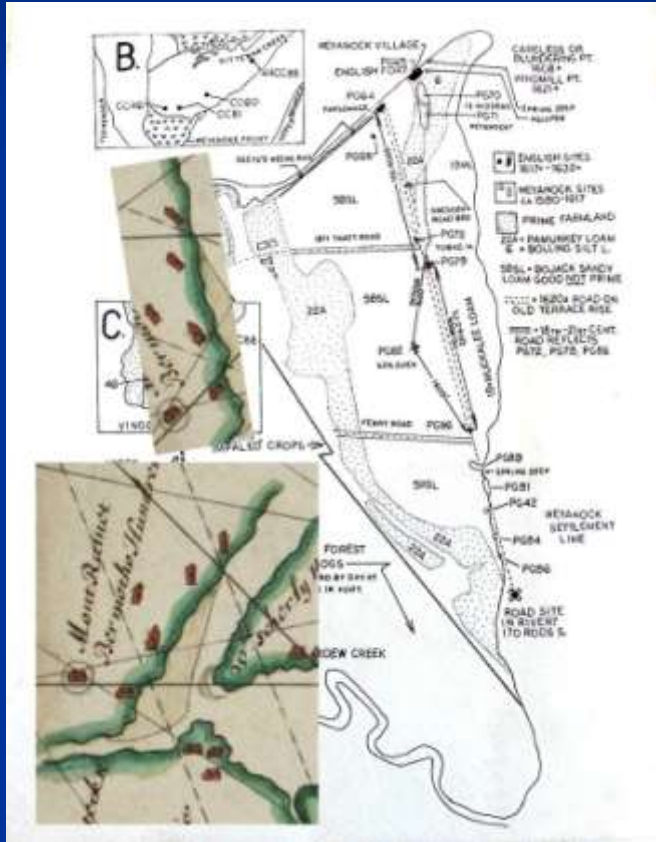
# Flowerdew Hundred: 2010: DHR Threatened Sites Project



DHR photographs



# Flowerdew and Bermuda Hundreds: Historic Continuity



Courtesy of C. Hodges

W&M Dept of Anthropology

# Flowerdew Hundred Destruction

Excavations by W&M, University  
of California – Berkley, UVA

Sites: 1620 English Fort,  
1630 Stonehouse, Indian Ossuaries,  
1<sup>st</sup> Windmill, 18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> C  
Plantations

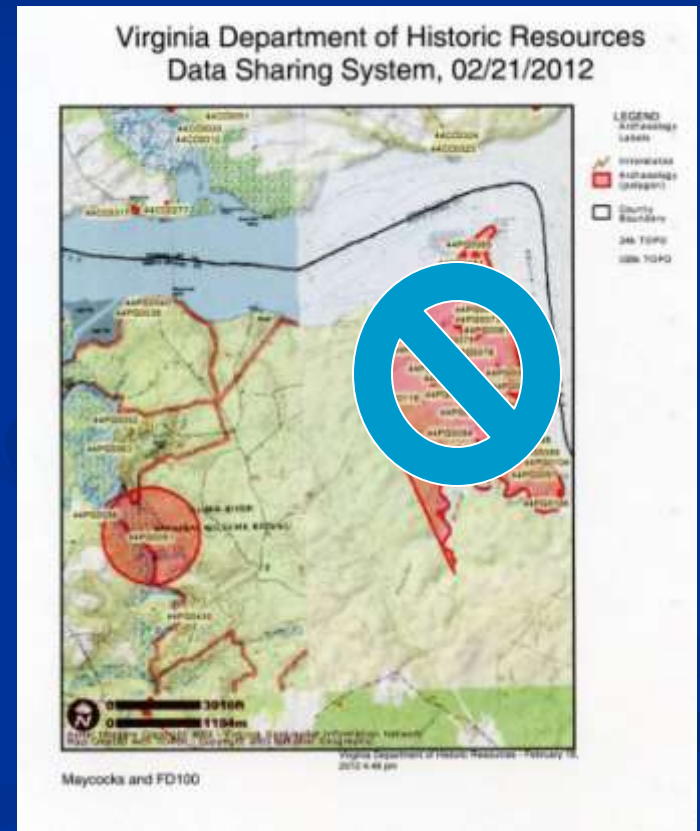
Grant's Pontoon Crossing

Great Relic Shoot Out

200-250 Metal Detectorists

8,921 Artifacts removed

Unknown number of resources  
destroyed



# The Ugly: Ebay Sales: April 25, 2014



Ebay – Springfield Musket Bayonet  
Petersburg



Ebay – Dug Civil War Artifacts

# Time Crime: Illegal Metal Detecting on State and Federal Land

- Archaeological data destroyed forever





# Time Crime: Relic Hunters “Records”



# The Bad: The Hobbyists

Good people doing not so good things

Remove artifacts from Historic Context

- Artifact only part of story

- Relations to other artifacts and features

- Ignores remaining material culture (ceramics, bone, etc.)

Reasoning

- Archaeologists too slow

- Artifacts just rotting in ground

- Personal Property rights

- Perfectly legal on private land

- Saving History



# Unfortunate Truth: Uncontrolled Metal-Detecting Destroys the Past

Unequivocally, no debate

Destroys historic context

Exposes metal to air – immediately begins to break down

Artifacts dispersed to 4 winds

Isolated on mantles

Sold on e-bay or auction

National “Hunts”



# The Good

Due diligence on recordation

Willingness to work with professional archaeologists

- With research design and appropriate research questions

- With public interpretation

- With refined methodology for recordation

Coordinate work on public lands with proper controls

Enlightenment – Stop uncontrolled destruction

Ethical minefield

- Some archaeologists willing to work with “hobbyists”

- Others – not so inclined





# The Good:

## Advanced Metal-Detecting for the Archaeologist

Assumption: Archaeologists are not inherently stupid

Do have ability to use tools

Do have ability to learn

AMDA – Approved by Register of Professional Archaeologists

1 day lecture, 2 days in field (Clermont Farm, VA)

Gain familiarity with machines



# DHR Guidelines

Battlefields recognized as unique resources

Difficulty of Survey

STPs inadequate

Landscape examination

Metal-Detecting Survey recommended

KOCSOA System (NPS ABPP)

Key Terrain

Observation – Fields of Fire

Cover

Obstacles

Avenues of Approach



# All DHR Collections Available for Research



# Getting the Data to the Public:

## Selected DHR Partnerships and Loans

University of Virginia  
College of William and Mary  
University of Tennessee  
University of Massachusetts  
University of Wyoming  
Virginia Museum of Natural History  
Smithsonian Institution  
James Madison University  
Virginia Commonwealth U  
USDA-Forest Service  
Prince William School  
Radford University  
Fairfield Foundation  
Fish & Wildlife Service

Archeological Society of VA  
COVA  
Smithsonian Institution  
DEQ, DCR, SF  
Richard Bland College  
Longwood U  
Stafford Cty Schools  
Archaeological Conservancy  
Preservation Virginia  
SVBF  
NPS  
Roanoke College  
NOAA  
CRI

+ over 80 other institutions



# Archaeological Sites are Non-Renewable Resources

Once destroyed, they cannot be reconstructed.

Sites are fragile and easily disturbed.

There are numerous natural and man-made threats to sites.

We do not need to add additional destructive processes.



# Professional Work: Conservation

**Preventative Conservation**

**Treatment Procedures**

**Exhibit Preparation**

**Preserved for the Future**



# 17<sup>th</sup> Century English Armor: Appropriate Conservation

## Expertise in Conservation



# Appropriate Conservation and Curation:

## Proper Packaging & Storage





# Proper Curation

Storage – stable environment

Accessibility

Conservation

Tracking/Loans



# Camp Misery (44ST0286), Stafford County, Virginia: Meals, Trash, and Ash



# Camp Misery (44ST0286), Stafford County, Virginia

## Soldiers' Huts

(Geier et. al 2013)



# Representative Material Culture Recovery – Not Metal Only





# What Archaeologists Can Do

Provide More Opportunities for Professional Work by Metal Detectorists

Change the Law

Obtain Property Easements

Explain Archaeology to Land-Owners

Educate the Public

Learn to use a Metal Detector





# We are All Stewards of the Past: The Past Belongs to All of Us



## Acknowledgements

Advanced Metal Detecting for the Archaeologist (RPA, Clermont Farm Project, 2013, Chris Espenshade, Director)

American Diggers (Spike TV; [www.spike.com/shows/american.diggers](http://www.spike.com/shows/american.diggers))

Diggers (National Geographic Channel;  
[www.channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/diggers/articles/meet-the-diggers/](http://www.channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/diggers/articles/meet-the-diggers/) )

DHR (Image Archive; MBBarber)

Ebay (2014 Dug Civil War Artifacts; [www.ebay.com/bhp/civil-war-artifacts](http://www.ebay.com/bhp/civil-war-artifacts))

Geier, Clarence R., M.L. Coleman, E.A. Samulski, and K.R. van Zandt (Site Architecture, Plan and Associated material Culture from One Sector of Camp Switzer (Misery (44ST0286): A Union Winter Encampment (1862/1863), Stafford County, Virginia. JMU, submitted to DHR, Richmond.

Hodges, Charles (Personal Communication 2013)

# “Ugly” Diggers’ Shows Unintended Consequences

## Add by Detectorist

Devalues history

Emphasizes Treasure/Money

Too much Heavy Machinery

Lack of Science

Land owners denying access to property

Less destruction of sites

Page 24 - The Smithfield Times-Wed., June 13, 2012

**Do you have land, an old house,  
ruins on your property, etc.?**

**Local avid metal detectorist/  
history preservationist  
looking for access to  
metal detect for relics**

Will pay 100% cash value of anything found and I will show you everything found. Will also leave the ground looking undisturbed. Will also consider paying leases for large tracts of land to metal detect. I can also help by finding lost jewelry, family pieces, property markers, etc. I will also potentially be loaning anything found to local organizations for display.

**Feel free and call if any questions  
757-775-7809**